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ABSTRACT

The distributional and interpretive properties of the reciprocal "selo" in Korean are analyzed and compared with reciprocals in other languages, particularly Japanese and English. It is proposed that if it can be assumed that there are two homophonous "selos" in Korean, four of the five idiosyncratic properties of "selo" are accounted for immediately, and that some contrasts and generalizations can be accounted for as interplay of a general operation, including distributor's LF-movement, binding theory, and a language-specific constraint. (MSE)

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Korean Reciprocals and LF-Movement

by

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A NEW THEORY OF SPEECH ACTS

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In this paper, I present and defend a new theory of Speech Acts in which a fundamental distinction is drawn between Speech Acts proper -- Declaratives, Interrogatives, and Directives -- and the myriad Social Actions that we perform using language such as making promises, making offers, issuing invitations, giving warnings, making threats, as well as making assertions, asking questions, and making requests or giving orders, which are the respective default social actions associated with Declaratives, Interrogatives, and Directives.[1] Thus, the sorts of things that previous theories have lumped together under the rubric "speech acts" are split here into actions that are fundamentally linguistic in nature and make a contribution to the meanings of utterances -- speech acts proper -- and actions that are fundamentally social in nature and make no contribution to the meanings of utterances -- the social actions that we use language to perform.

A Sketch of the Theory

My theory is that sentences are normally meant literally in conversation with the social force of an utterance being predictable given

- the literal meaning of the sentence (which would include specification of the speech act it performs)
- contextual information (including what has preceded conversationally, aspects of the social context, and relevant background knowledge)
- a set of conditions on social actions
- principles governing conversation (including turn taking rules, preference principles, etc.)
- common sense reasoning of a Gricean sort.

The principal benefit of this theory is that it provides the basis for predicting what social action a given utterance will perform in a given situation of use. Moreover, I believe that it is better supported empirically than competing theories, and that it provides a superior account of so-called "indirect speech acts."

I assume that Declaratives, Interrogatives, and Directives are subject to sincerity conditions and argue that these sincerity conditions can play a role in predicting what social action an utterance is intended to perform in a given circumstance of use. Declaratives are subject to condition (1.a), Interrogatives to condition (1.b), and Directives to condition (1.c).

(1) Sincerity Conditions
   a. Declaratives: for S asserts P to H: S must have a warranted belief that P is true.
   b. Interrogatives: for S asks H whether or not P: S must have a warranted belief that either P is true or P is false.
      for S asks H an Interrogative of the form "WH-X, ...X...": S must have a warranted belief that there is an instantiation of "...X..." which is true.
   c. Directives: If S directs that H do A, then S must have a warranted belief that H can do A.

I shall further assume, as is customary, that language use is socially purposive and argue that recognition of the social purpose of a piece of talk is crucial to the identification of the social action it is intended to perform. I shall further argue that social actions are subject to certain conditions that must be satisfied before they can be successfully performed. These conditions are essentially those that Searle (1969) and others following his lead have called "felicity conditions" though I will be saying that these are conditions on social actions rather than speech act felicity conditions.

Consider the following conditions on the social actions of asserting, questioning, and requesting, which are, of course, the default social actions performed by Declaratives, Interrogatives, and Directives.

(2) Asserting: S asserts P to H
  Purpose: to cause H to come to believe that P is true
  Sincerity Condition:
    S has a warranted belief that P is true
  Preparatory Conditions:
    S believes that H does not know that P is true
    S believes that H may wish to know that P is true

(3) Questioning: S asks H about P
  Purpose: to come to know such-and-such[2]
  Sincerity Condition:
    S wishes to know such-and-such
  Preparatory Conditions:
    S believes that H may know such-and-such
    S believes that H may be willing to tell S such-and-such

(4) Requesting: S makes a request of H to do A
  Purpose: to secure a commitment from H to do A
  Sincerity Condition:
    S wants A to be done.
  Preparatory Conditions:
    S believes that H is able to do A
    S believes that H might be willing to do an A-type thing for S

On my view, then, speech acts proper are subject just to truth-related sincerity conditions while social actions are subject to sincerity and preparatory conditions of an essentially social nature.

Schegloff's Challenge

Making a sharp distinction between speech acts proper and the social actions that utterances are used to perform nicely answers a challenge by the Conversation Analyst, Emanuel Schegloff, concerning the utility of syntactic form and literal meaning in accounts of how language is understood in conversation. Schegloff observed, as have many others, of course, that one can use sentences to perform other than the default actions normally associated with them. He says that "what distinguishes questions from first pair parts of other sorts [e.g., complaints, requests, etc., mlg] does not seem in any straightforward way to be sought from linguistic resources," arguing (p. 34f) that "if the question form can be used for actions other than questioning, and questioning can be accomplished by linguistic forms other than questions, then a relevant problem can be posed not only about how a question does something other than questioning, but about how it does questioning; not only about how questioning is done by nonquestion forms, but about how it gets accomplished by question forms."

Consider the following extract of a conversation provided by Schegloff (1984, 33).

(5) Schegloff (1984)
W: Why is it that **we** have to go to **their** place.
H: Because **she** ((head-motioning to daughter playing on the floor)) can go out more easily than **their** kids can.

Schegloff claims that W's contribution to the following conversation was initially construed as a question and answered as a question, but that it was latter recognized by both W and H as a complaint. Schegloff argues that the utterance *Why is it that **we** have to go to **their** place.* is ambiguous and that whether what W said will be heard as a question or as a complaint cannot be attributable to its form and meaning because the utterance has the same form and meaning on either construal. On Schegloff's view, if *Why is it that **we** have to go to **their** place.* is being used as a question, then it is not a complaint and if it is being used as a complaint then it is not a question. However, as William Lycan has pointed out to me, this is surely not true. It is perfectly possible that W might not know why W and H must go to the other couple's home and thus genuinely want to know what these reasons are and at the same time be quite put out at the inconvenience. However, even if this view is incorrect, it is quite clear that Schegloff's dichotomy is a false one deriving from a failure to draw a distinction between speech acts and social actions.

On the theory being advanced here, a speech act Interrogative can be employed to perform a variety of social actions depending on its meaning and the context in which it is uttered, and thus the fact that an utterance is being used to perform the **social action** of making a complaint is perfectly consistent with the utterance's being a **speech act** Interrogative. Indeed, I submit that we cannot account for the specific sort of complaint W meant to be making unless we assume, contra Schegloff, that it was meant literally as an Interrogative.

Complaints would seem to be a species of assessment in that they constitute making some sort of value judgment and, thus, the unmarked complaint will normally be a Declarative and the normal purpose of a complaint is to cause the listener to share the judgment being made.[3] Thus, had W meant merely to be registering a complaint designed to secure a preferred response of agreement, she might have uttered either (6.a) or (6.b)

(6) a. I don't think **we** should have to go to **their** place.
b. I think the reasons why **we** should have to go to **their** place are unconvincing.

by way of making her complaint, depending on what knowledge W and H shared and what the specific nature of this complaint was.

Why, then, did W use an Interrogative to make her complaint? Schegloff provides too little information to provide a fully confidant answer to this question, but I would like to develop one possibility. I would like, in fact, to pursue Lycan's suggestion that W's question is meant both to request information and to register a complaint. One reason to suspect that this is true derives from how *Why is it that **we** have to go to **their** place.* seems to have been pronounced. It is a bit difficult to see how W's question could have been heard as a mere information question given the emphasis on *we* and *there* and the utterance's terminal falling contour, the latter being indicated in Schegloff's notation by the sentence ending period, for this is hardly the default way of

pronouncing a *why*-question. Secondly, the presence of *have* is a dead give-away that the speaker does not desire to go to the other couple's home and feels that she is being coerced into doing so. Finally, I believe that *why*-questions that are used to inquire about the reasons for someone's choosing to adopt some course of action when others are available typically implicate that the reasons may be suspect. If I say that I am going to do something and you sincerely ask me why I am going to do this thing, what you say entails that you do not know why I am going to do this thing, from which it follows that the reasons are neither obvious nor do they follow from anything you know about me or the action in question. Hence, simply asking me why I am going to do this thing can suggest that you think my reasons may not be good ones. If this reasoning is correct, then it is clear that the form (including pronunciation) and the literal meaning of what W says both play a decisive role in determining the complaint reading of this sentence, contrary to Schegloff's view.

Promises

We know that Declaratives, Interrogatives, and Directives can be used to perform a wide variety of social actions other than the default social actions associated with them. If I say

(7) Bill will be in his office at noon.

to you when it is clear that I genuinely believe that Bill will be in his office at noon and my purpose is simply to convey this information to you and the conditions on performing the social action of asserting something to someone are satisfied, then, clearly, I will have uttered a Declarative that is intended to convey information. My utterance will have performed the default social action associated with Declaratives.[4]

Now consider

(8) I will be in my office at noon.

Now, although (8) can be used simply to convey information, as when one person recites his or her itinerary to another, it could also be used to make a promise. In such a case, on my view, (8) is a Declarative used to perform, not the social action of simply conveying information, but that of making a promise. On the other hand, although one can imagine special circumstances in which (7) could be used to make a promise, as we shall see below, this would not be the customary use for such a sentence.

Promises are not speech acts at all on the view being advanced here. As a result, whether or not an utterance makes a promise will have to be something that we predict. In order to see how this might go, let us consider what promising consists of.

(9) Promising: S makes a promise to H to do A
Purpose: to make a commitment to H to do A
Sincerity Condition:
S intends to do A
Preparatory conditions:
S believes that H wishes S to do A[5]
S is able to do A

Now, I would argue that sentence (8) is a literal Declarative whether it is intended simply to convey information or to make a promise and, as such, is semantically indistinguishable from sentence (7) except in respect to the difference in meaning

between *I* and *Bill*. The question we want to answer is why is it that (8) can be used to make a promise while (7) would not ordinarily have such a use.

A Declarative (speech act) like *I will be in my office at noon* constitutes a prediction about the future behavior of the speaker while *Bill will be in his office at noon* constitutes a prediction about the future behavior of someone else. Now, satisfaction of sincerity condition (1.a) on Declaratives -- the Speaker has a warranted belief in the truth of what he says -- is possible in the case of a future prediction by a speaker about his or her own behavior just in case the speaker has an **intention** to behave in the asserted way. This intention is entailed by (8), then, given that it is a Declarative. In a context in which the behavior **benefits** the hearer, then the utterance will count as a promise (social action), for both the sincerity and preparatory conditions on promises will have been satisfied. Now, *Bill will be in his office at noon* cannot be used to make a promise directly for there is no entailment of a speaker intention to perform some action. Instead, the speaker is giving his or her assurances, rather than a promise, that Bill will be in his office at noon. However, in a circumstance in which the speaker fully controls Bill's behavior (as might be the case if Bill were the son of the speaker), (7) could be used to make an indirect promise. It would be indirect because the required speaker intention is in the background -- there is an implicit, rather than explicit, assurance by the speaker that he or she intends to cause Bill to be in his office at noon. Thus, we can account for the different ways in which utterances like (8) and (7) can be used while assuming that these sentences are semantically identical up to the difference in reference of *I* and *Bill*. I take this to be an exceedingly important virtue of the proposed theory.

We now have one important way in which an utterance can be used to perform a social action different from that of the default. Utterance (8) is consistent with the conditions on asserting something to someone even when it is intended to make a promise. In such a case, when an utterance is consistent with the default social use and some more particular social use, the intended social action will always be the more particular one.

Another way in which an utterance can be used to perform a social action different from that of the default is when an utterance is not uttered sincerely. Suppose A has proposed that A and B do something together that B regards as very foolish and B says *Are you crazy?* Here, I would suggest that the speaker and hearer would normally not genuinely believe that *yes* is a possible correct answer and thus the sincerity condition on Interrogatives is not satisfied and the utterance cannot have the default social use of an Interrogative of asking an information question. However, I believe that *Are you crazy?* is an Interrogative. To be fully sincere, utterance of the Interrogative *Are you crazy?* entails that the proposition 'You are crazy' is either true or false. Since one rarely, if ever, asks this question of someone one genuinely believes is crazy, the speaker implicates that he believes that the speaker is not crazy. However, given that A's proposal has drawn an response that, taken fully literally and sincerely, entails that he may be crazy and given that A knows that B does not believe that he is crazy, he must draw the conclusion that what is crazy is not him, but his proposal. Thus, even here, one must construe *Are you crazy?* as a genuine, even if not sincerely meant, Interrogative in order to account for how it is interpreted.

Requests

In what remains of this paper, I propose to turn to consider requests. Requests have been of paramount importance in speech act theory because they seem so commonly to be conveyed indirectly. However, the problems that so-called "indirect speech acts" have seemed to present to theorists are largely, I submit, pseudo-problems

that have arisen out of the methodologically suspect practice of considering how sentences might be used independently of the conversational contexts in which they normally occur. Certainly, if one asks oneself whether or not a sentence like

(10) Can I have a half pint of the blackberry jam?

could be used to make a request, the answer must be "yes." That is, at least, the answer we have always given. However, in actual conversation a rather different picture of how a sentence like this is used emerges. Consider the following attested conversation.

(11) Levinson (1983)

A: Do you have the blackberry jam?	1
B: Yes.	2
A: Okay. Can I have a half pint then?	3
B: Sure.	4

Levinson (1983) takes the view of Conversational Analysts that a conversation consists of two speech sequences -- a pre-request sequence followed by a request sequence. I would suggest, instead, that both *Do you have the blackberry jam?* and *Can I have a half pint then?* are sincerely uttered Interrogatives which are intended to perform the default social action of Interrogatives of requesting information. The responses of B make quite clear that B takes A's utterances literally as Interrogatives. *Yes* is a conventional response to *Yes-No* information questions. And, *sure* is a conventional response to *Yes-No* questions in which the speaker wishes to assure the hearer of something. It is not request-specific. Thus, if I have invited Mary to come to a party and she has accepted, I could respond with *sure* if someone were to ask me whether or not Mary is coming. No request is involved here.

I would like to suggest that in conversation (11), A manages to make a request despite the fact that neither of A's utterances count as requests. Moreover, B's responses to what A says commit B to supplying the blackberry jam to A, which is to say that B has managed to agree to satisfy this request even though neither of B's utterances counts as explicitly expressing such an agreement. How do we account for this?

I would argue that requesting is a complex social action designed to secure a hearer agreement to provide a service of one sort or another -- perform a favor, supply a product, etc.[6] Such an agreement will normally depend on the willingness and ability of the hearer to satisfy the request. As is true of (11), requesting often involves a certain amount of negotiation concerning the willingness and ability of the hearer to perform the desired service. I shall argue that how elaborate a given negotiation will be is determined by what aspects of the hearer's willingness and ability to perform the service can be assumed in the context.

It is clear from how we behave in conversation that once a hearer has conceded an **ability** and **willingness** to perform some action in a context in which the speaker has made clear a **desire** that this action be performed, he or she is committed to performing this action. Simply walking into a retail store implies an interest in buying something -- a customer desire of some sort. Moreover, a clerk's **willingness** to satisfy reasonable customer desires is also implicit in this sort of context.[7] Thus, what is required in order for a commercial transaction to take place is for the customer to make explicit what his or her specific desire is, for the clerk to make clear his or her ability to satisfy that desire, and for the customer to determine whether or not he or she is willing to pay the required price. The inquiry in conversation (11) about the existence of the blackberry

jam is tantamount (Maxim of Relevance) to an expression of a desire for the jam in question -- it would otherwise be quite otiose. It is, however, a genuine information question inquiring after the **ability** of the clerk to supply the jam. A's second question is also a genuine information question inquiring after the **ability** of the clerk to supply the jam in a half pint amount. This latter point is important, for clerks are not always willing and able to supply goods in amounts desired by customers, so a genuine information question is called for here. Once the clerk says *sure* he or she is committed to providing the customer with a half pint of the blackberry jam, for his or her willingness and ability to satisfy the customer desire have been established.[8] I see nothing particularly to be gained by calling *Can I have a half pint then?* a request. It is merely the last turn by the requester in a request negotiation and we surely do not want to say that any last turn of a requester in a request negotiation is a request.

To a very striking degree, sentences which we would in isolation be tempted to say could be used to perform this or that indirect speech act are construed in conversation as having their literal meanings. Thus, an Interrogative will normally be understood as an Interrogative and responded to as an Interrogative no matter what social action it is intended to perform: make a complaint or make a request or request information, etc. This strikes at the heart of Schegloff's assault on the role of syntactic form and literal meaning in conversation. It also strikes at the heart of all extant accounts of so-called "indirect speech acts".

Indirect Speech Acts

The two most credible alternative theories of indirect speech acts of current interest more or less accept Searle's (1975) view that the request use or meaning of a sentence like (10) is an implicature, but take the line that the implicature which has somehow been short-circuited though they differ on how short-circuiting arises.

In a very important paper, *Two Types of Convention in Indirect Speech Acts*, Morgan (1978) offered the view that utterances like (10) -- present tense, *yes-no can*-type questions with first person subjects (or second person subjects in cases like *Can you give me a half pint of the blackberry jam?*) -- while retaining their conventional meanings as questions, have acquired a conventional **use** as requests as a result of the "short-circuiting" of the request implicature just noted. He argues that as the linguistic means for performing some speech act (or, in our terms, social action) becomes more and more specific, we gradually come to attach the implicature directly to the utterances we use to perform this act. What arises, then, is a convention of use, rather than a convention of meaning.

Morgan's view is very appealing, for it allows us to account for the fact that speakers construe utterances like (10) as requests without supposing that they engage in complex calculations or that it has a request meaning. I am inclined to think, however, that we neither need nor should we want Morgan's concept of short-circuiting in order to account for data like (10), for the principles that operate here seem to be the same as in the case considered earlier. The difference is that the Morgan-type cases involving requests seem to occur in very rich contexts -- contexts in which either the willingness or ability or both the willingness and ability of a hearer to satisfy the requests can be assumed. Thus, if the customer of example (11) had happened to see a half pint jar of the blackberry jam on a shelf, he or she might reasonably have utilized utterance (10) to make his or her request for all of the conditions on making a successful request would have been satisfied.

The conventionalization, or short-circuiting, that Morgan argued for arises, on my account, as a result of a kind of priming that occurs in information-rich contexts.

This is nicely illustrated by a Request Routine that evolved between a colleague and me. At some point in the past, we must have had a conversation along the lines of

(12) Hypothetical Conversation (the talk in question would have been a late afternoon talk)
B: Are you going to the talk today?
M: Yeah, why do you ask?
B: I need a ride home. Could you give me one?
M: Where do you live?
B: Clintonville.
M: Sure, that's not far out of my way.

Later, our conversations went like this:

(13) Recalled Conversation

B: Are you going to the talk today?	1
M: Yeah, do you need a ride home?	2
B: Yeah, could you give me one?	3
M: Sure.	4

We have a quite rich context here. The question of where B lives has been answered and my willingness in principle to take this indirect way home has been established. The importance of context is clear. Had another colleague or a student asked me, *Are you going to the talk today?*, it is most unlikely that I would have replied *Yeah, do you need a ride home?*.

This sort of Request Routine might have evolved into

(14) Hypothetical Conversation
B: Say, could you give me a ride home after the talk/faculty meeting/etc. today?
M: Sure.

though I don't recall it ever doing so. Since my willingness in principle to give this colleague rides home had been established, all he needed to do was inquire after my ability to do so. However, this would have been possible in this case only if he happened to know independently whether or not I was going to the talk or faculty meeting. That is, B's Interrogative in (14) requires a richer context than does the first Interrogative of (13).

Levinson has developed a rather different sort of theory of how it is that we come to use a sentence like (10) as a request. He argues that a primary desideratum of requesting is the avoidance of what are called "dispreferred responses" -- in this case, rejections. He argues that our desire to avoid such responses leads us to employ what he calls "pre-requests," which are designed to "test the waters," so to speak. Thus, in conversation (11), line 1 is a pre-request, which, on receiving a preferred response in line 2, leads to the request of line 3. On Levinson's view, the sort of short-circuiting Morgan spoke of in connection with examples like (10) results from the dropping out of the second and third turns of conversations like (11).

As noted, Levinson takes the view that A's first turn in (11) is a pre-request, while A's second turn is a request. Unfortunately, this account sheds no light whatever on the fact that A's second turn, if request at all, is an indirect request. It employs an

sentence that looks very much like an Interrogative. Thus Levinson's theory leaves unexplained the very thing it ought to be accounting for -- how an Interrogative could be used as the last utterance by a speaker trying to make a request. Clearly, since both utterances are Interrogatives, what is pre-request and request must have very little to do with syntactic form and literal meaning -- everything seems to hinge on the position in a conversation of an utterance. Thus, Levinson seems to be taking a position very much like that of Schegloff. Moreover, Levinson is very unclear how it is that we recognize request sequences. Note that

(15) Are you going to Mary's party?

would be a pre-request if followed by *Could you give me a ride there?* or a pre-invitation if followed by *Would you like to go with me?* One cannot tell until one hears this next utterance and it is important to note that in this hypothetical case, it will be the meaning of the utterance that determines what social action is involved, precisely as the theory being advanced here predicts.

The case I have provided, though in some measures hypothetical, provides a different view of how the phenomenon of short-circuiting evolves. Note that the first turn of conversation (14) is an amalgam of turns 1 and 3 of (13), rather than a dropping out of turns 2 and 3, as Levinson's approach would suggest ought to go on. And, example (10) would seem to arise as a result of an amalgam of turns 1 and 3 of a conversation like (11). We construct amalgams of first and third turns in contexts in which the answer to the question of the first turn is known to be affirmative. I see no reason to invoke a principle of avoidance of dispreferred responses to account for this sort of short-circuiting. It is important to recognize that a principle of avoidance of dispreferred responses provides an excellent account of why we might utilize a certain indirectness of communication, but it does not follow from this that it explains how indirect communication works. A principle of conversational economy -- recall Grices's Maxim "Be brief" -- suffices to account for why we construct conversational amalgams of the sort I posit. Context determines when we can.

What are we to make of the widely held view that a question like *Can I have a half pint of the blackberry jam?* or *Could you give me a ride home?* has a **conventional** use as a request? It should be clear that I am disputing this claim -- at least, I am disputing the claim that their possible uses as requests is a property of the utterance (or type of utterance of which it is an instance) simpliciter. The strongest claim we can make, I think, is that questions of this type are **habitually** used in request negotiations in conversation, but this is a very different sort of claim.

The claim that it is in some sense a property of the utterance *Could you give me a ride home?* or of the type of utterance of which it is an instance that it has a conventional use as a request is clearly wrong. At most what can be said is that it is a property of the utterance or of that type of utterance that it can be used to make a request **in certain particular types of contexts**. Notice that in conversation (12) it is not being used to make a request, but is a genuine information question. In conversations (13) and (14), however, it functions as the request trigger. Now, it will be usable as a request trigger in virtue of some property *Pu* of the utterance and some property *Pc* of the context. The question arises as to what *Pu* and *Pc* are? I submit that *Pc* contains at least a prior establishment of the **willingness in principle** of the hearer to provide rides home. In the case of (13) and (14), this willingness has been established as a result of the prior behavior of the hearer. What, then, is *Pu*? According to the conventionality theory, this will be some arbitrary marker or markers occurring on one or more elements of the utterance that signals that it has a conventional use as a

request. On my view, *Pu* is simply the literal meaning of the utterance. The element of habitualness, which has mistakenly been taken for a matter of convention, consists of the speaker's knowing that in contexts like *Pc*, a requesting context in which the willingness, but not the ability, of the hearer to satisfy the request has been established, one habitually frames ability questions along the lines of *Can you ...?* or *Can you ...?*

Richard Janda has pointed out to me that my theory seems vulnerable to the argument of such scholars as Sadock (1974) and Morgan (1978) that the appearance of *please* in utterances like *Could you please give me a ride home?* is evidence that this sort of request is a conventional request, for the distribution of *please* has seemed to be restricted to same. However, it is clear that this is far from being true. One day in October, I walked into a frozen yogurt store, and said *A large pineapple, please* by way of ordering a dish of pineapple yogurt. Later that day, the cashier at a supermarket, after ringing up my purchases said *Thirteen fifty nine, please.* I submit that neither noun phrase, *a large pineapple* nor *thirteen fifty nine* (which could be a date, of course, in another context) counts as an instance of a conventional request form. Examples like these last two further confirm the theory being advanced here. The yogurt store lists its flavors, the amounts it offers, and its prices on signs behind the clerk. Thus, since my desire to purchase something was implicated by my standing in the store at the place where one does one's ordering and the willingness of the clerk to serve me could be assumed, all I needed to do was name what I wanted because I could assume the ability and willingness of the clerk to provide a large dish of pineapple at a price I was willing to pay. I think that we may want to conclude that *please* occurs in indirect requests, not because they are conventional requests, but because they are not, but it will take some thought to work out all of the implications of this view.

When a speaker can assume the willingness in principle of a hearer to accede to a request, he or she can place a good deal of pressure on the hearer to accede to the request by using a *Could*-type question as a request trigger, for this reduces acceding to the request simply to ability to do so. If the hearer is able to accede to the request, but unwilling on that occasion to do so, he or she is placed in a very difficult social position. This fact may explain why use ability-type questions do not seem to figure as prominiently in some cultures as they do in the United States.

It seems that ability-type *Yes-No* interrogatives are normally not used in Japanese to perform one turn indirect requests.[9] Instead, willingness questions are used. This seems to support the thesis that we are dealing with a matter of convention. It would seem to be a convention of English, but not of Japanese, to use this type of sentence to make requests. However, on my view, requesting is a social action and if Japanese does not allow such questions, the explanation may be at least partially social in nature. Assuming someone's willingness to perform some action for oneself is quite presumptuous. If we assume that ability-type requests can be used only in conversational contexts in which a willingess by the hearer to satisfy the request can be assumed, then we could account for this important difference between English and Japanese simply by saying that assumptions of hearer willingness to satisfy requests is not tolerated in the Japanese culture. From this it would follow that ability-type questions could not be used in making one turn requests.

Conclusion

I would like to conclude on a contentious note. It should be clear that if one accepts what I have said, there simply is no problem of indirect speech acts as such. Why then has such a fuss been made of them? The answer is that the problem of indirect speech acts is the epiphenomenal consequence of examining sentences in isolation from the conversational contexts in which they occur. Clearly, if one considers

a sentence like *Could I have a six-pack of Bud Light?* or *Say, could you give me a ride home after the talk today?* in isolation from the conversational contexts in which they occur, it would not be hard to convince oneself that it could be used to make a request. On the other hand, if one looks at how sentences like these are actually used in conversation, we find that they are typically used as information questions determining the ability and/or willingness of the hearer to assist the speaker and, as such, are just one step in Request Routines. However, in certain informationally rich contexts, a request can be carried out in just one conversational step. I submit that this is not a property of the utterance, as Morgan would have it, but is a property of the utterance in the context in which it is uttered, which is an entirely different thing. Examining sentences in isolation leads us to assign to individual sentences a larger conversational burden that seems typically to be the case. The lesson to be learned from this is that we simply must stop looking at sentences in isolation from the conversational or other discourse contexts in which they occur when doing speech act theorizing, or, perhaps, when doing any kind of pragmatics.

Footnotes

[1]I would like to thank Arnold Zwicky, Richard Janda, and Jack Hoeksema for comments made on the oral version of this paper and to William Lycan for comments on a previous draft. My debt to John Austin and John Searle will be apparent to anyone familiar to their work. Indeed, I have tried to stay as close to Searle (1969, 1975) in my formulation of the present theory as I could.

[2]I use "such-and-such" to avoid cumbersome expressions of the sort used in the statement of the sincerity conditions on Interrogatives above.

[3]See Pomerantz (1984) for a nice study of assessments in conversation.

[4]Actually, if the hearer will benefit from Bill's being in his office at noon, then I will be doing more than merely conveying information to the hearer. In such a case, I will be giving assurances to the hearer.

[5]The hearer benefit of a promise is implicit in this condition.

[6]Such agreements are very much like promises in their structure. I invite the reader to compare the structural descriptions of the social actions of promises (9) and requests (4). The speaker intention of a promise corresponds to the assumption of hearer willingness in requests and there is a corresponding relationship between the preparatory conditions concerning ability.

[7]The existence of signs saying *We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone.* in Southern retail establishments during an earlier period in American life expressly denied a willingness to satisfy the desires of certain customers and was doubtless felt to be necessary because of the normal presumption that clerks in retail stores are willing to satisfy reasonable desires of any customer.

[8]It can be presumed that the customer either knows what the price of the jam is or believes that it will be reasonable, for the negotiation makes no reference to price.

[9]I am indebted to Shigeru Miyagawa for this information. Although he cites an ability-type example in Miyagawa (1982), his position is that examples of this sort are quite exceptional.

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